

## What Does It Mean?

Testing positive for HIV means that your blood has signs of the Human Immuno-deficiency Virus (HIV). It **does not** mean that you have AIDS.

A doctor needs to examine you and perform tests that will help him check your health status. Your post-test counselor can explain the test accuracy and answer any questions you may have.

Finding out you have HIV is scary. There are many support groups made up of other people in Montana who have tested positive. Call the Montana AIDS Hotline at **1-800-233-6668** to find out where to find a group.

## Confidentiality (privacy)

The professionals who perform and record your test understand the need to keep your results confidential. Discuss any concerns you may have about privacy with your post-test counselor.

## Early Intervention Program

Enrollment in an Early Intervention Program (EIP) can help you learn more about your infection. Drug therapies can be prescribed by your doctor in the early stages of the infection that will help to control the virus in your body. Changing risky behaviors may slow disease progression and prevent the spread of HIV.

The EIP can help you put this disease into perspective. EIP can provide you with a variety of services, including education, a medical evaluation and emotional support. This is all done in a confidential setting. EIP site numbers are on the back of this brochure.

## How Is HIV Spread?

HIV is **not** spread by casual contact, but by certain activities. These high risk behaviors include passing semen, blood and/or vaginal secretions from an infected person to someone else. These fluids are usually passed through unprotected sexual contact or the sharing of injectable drug needles and syringes. Open sores, cuts or other skin injuries make it easier for HIV to enter into the body. Sexually transmitted diseases (STD) such as herpes and syphilis can cause sores that can help HIV infect others, or can help someone get infected if their sores come into contact with HIV infected bodily fluids. Many STDs are treatable. See your doctor or nearest health department.

Even though you are already HIV positive, you are at risk of becoming re-infected if you participate in high risk behaviors. You could be re-infected with a different strain of HIV which could be stronger than your original infection and could complicate your health care.

## Protect Yourself & Others

### Protect yourself if you have sex:

- ✓ Use a new condom each time you have oral, anal or vaginal sex. Latex or polyurethane is best because HIV can pass through lambskin or natural condoms.
- ✓ Use water-based lubricants, like KY jelly, **NOT** oils or lotions, like Vaseline or Crisco, that can cause a condom to break.

### Protect yourself if you use drugs:

- ✓ Never share drug needles or "works".
- ✓ Clean drug needles with bleach, leave them sit 30 seconds, repeat 3

times, then rinse with clean water 3 times. Do this between each use.

✓ Mixing sex, drugs and alcohol is risky. If you are drunk or high it is harder to make good decisions about having safer sex.

#### **Protect your baby if you are pregnant:**

✓ You can pass HIV on to your baby during pregnancy, the birth or breast-feeding.

✓ Certain medicines can lower your risk of passing your HIV to your baby during pregnancy. Ask your doctor.

**The only sure way to avoid passing HIV on to someone else is not to have sex or share needles or syringes.** This includes tattoo or piercing needles. Ask your post-test counselor about drug treatment programs if you are ready to seek treatment.

Please do not donate blood, plasma, sperm body organs or tissues. If you are a donor on your driver's license, have it changed, tell them you changed your mind.

### **Partner Notification**

Since your test is positive, any sex or needle-sharing partners you may have had need to be notified and given the opportunity to receive counseling and testing. By law, public health personnel cannot tell your partner(s) your identity or the time or place of possible infection.

This is a very sensitive task. You don't have to do this alone. Public health staff can either tell your partner(s) or help you tell them. We are here to help.

### **Take Charge of Your Health**

Taking good care of yourself is important! Visit a doctor or clinic right away for a check up. You will need to see a health professional

regularly to check on how well your body is fighting HIV.

Ask about new treatments that help people with HIV stay healthier, longer. These include the new protease inhibitors as well as other drugs that can help protect you from pneumonia and other infections.

Keep a close watch on your health between checkups. Take your meds the way they have been prescribed, if you don't, you could be risking your health.

Eat healthy foods, get enough rest and talk to other HIV positive people, find out what they do to stay healthy. There is a lot to learn and your health care providers, local community based organizations and support organizations can help you find out what you need to know.

Smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol and using drugs all can weaken your body's defense system against disease.

Exercise can help keep you strong and help relieve stress.

Share your feelings with friends and loved ones when you are ready to do so. If you can't do that, find a support group where you can share your feelings. This can help a lot.

### **So Remember:**

**Living with HIV is more than just medical treatment alone. It means learning to take care of your overall health.**

✓ **Choose safe ways to be with a lover, so you do not pass HIV to others.**

✓ **See a doctor or visit a clinic and have regular check ups.**

✓ **If the doctor gives you medicine, take it regularly.**

✓ **Take charge of your own health. Learn to eat a healthy diet, manage your stress and exercise regularly to feel your best!**

✓ When you feel ready to do so, join a support group or talk to your friends or family. Get the support you need.

## **Early Intervention Programs (EIP)**

Billings 247-3350  
Deering Community Health Clinic

Bozeman 587-0681  
Bridger Mountain Family Planning

Butte 723-6507  
Family Services Center

Great Falls 454-6950  
Cascade City-County Health Dept

Havre 265-5481  
Hill County Health Dept ext 66

Helena 443-2584  
Lewis & Clark Health Dept

Kalispell 758-5756  
Flathead City-County Health Dept

Missoula 523-4775  
Missoula City-County Health Dept